



INFLUENCE OF TOUR GUIDES COMMUNICATION SKILLS ON THE SATISFACTION OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS AT NAIROBI TOURIST CIRCUIT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the influence of tour guides' communication skills on international tourists' satisfaction at the Nairobi tourist circuit, Kenya. The job characteristics theory supported the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design and used the Cochran formula to obtain the study's sample size of 278 respondents from the target population of 2851 international tourists visiting the Nairobi circuit. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The research instrument's content and face validity were enhanced by conducting a detailed literature review and consultation with subject experts in the tourism sector. Further instrument reliability was determined by carrying out a pilot study in the Central Kenya Circuit. The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was computed from the obtained data to measure the instruments' internal consistency, where an Alpha coefficient of 0.8111 was obtained. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings illustrated that tour guide communication skills had a strong statistically significant relation with international tourist satisfaction at the Nairobi tourist circuit. In conclusion, tour guide communication skills influence the satisfaction of international tourists. The recommendation of the study was that tour guides need to be fluent in communicating in many languages. This would help serve different tourists effectively; thus, the tourists would be satisfied with the service delivery.

Keywords: *Tour Guides competencies, Tour Guides' communication skills, International tourists' satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction.*

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INTRODUCTION

Tourist satisfaction is a nebulous concept that is under-researched and inadequately operationalized (Abidakun & Tunde-Ajayi 202). Tour firms have emphasized that tourist satisfaction is a critical tool for their firms' competitive edge. Tour guides are responsible for enhancing the tourists' satisfaction by providing outstanding services that will make the visits more enjoyable. Firms need to improve their tour guides' professional competencies in order to delight tourists and improve their travel experiences (Chiang & Chen, 2014). According to Cetinkaya and Öter (2016), tour guide communication skills are considered as an essential element that can be used to measure an individual tour guide's performance as well as that of the firm.

According to Togoch and Koki (2018), tourist satisfaction plays a critical role in indicating the strength of tourism, and in meeting the tourist satisfaction goals, tour guides, as one of the organs of tourism staff, need to portray a high degree of tourism service skills. The role of the tour guide is not only to provide guidance but have the mandate to give environmental and cultural descriptions of the tour sites (Martín *et al.*, 2019). According to Lackey (2016), tour guide interpreting skills enhances tourists' understanding of attraction sites and culture. However, there has been a concern globally about the quality of human resource in the tourism industry, where tour guide falls. The sector encounters both internal and external challenges, such as weak tourism administration, increased risks in some tourist attraction sites, weak human resource (tour guides) competencies, and poor service delivery (Lin, Lin & Chen, 2017).

World Travel and Tourism Council report (2020) indicated that international tourism is a critical source of revenue for different countries. The report asset that the tourism sector contributes to about 10% of the world's Gross Domestic Product and 10% of employment opportunities in the year 2019. According to Kuo, Nien-Te, Yi-Sung Cheng, Kuo-Chien Chang, and Li-Yueh Chuang (2018), tour guide

competency helps to deliver quality services and thus leading to tourist satisfaction

According to Aryasa, Bambang, and Muhammad (2017), tour guides' services are critical in the tourism sector because they assist tourists in understanding the local culture, environment, and attraction sites from just a mere visit to a more enjoyable experience. As observed by Al- Jahwari et al. (2016), a study to examine the communication competency of tour guides in turkey revealed that communication skills competency was a key driver of tourist satisfaction. It was established that for enhanced international tourist satisfaction, the tour guide must be able to interpret the natural and cultural heritage of the tourist site in a clear manner.

A study by Abidakun and Tunde-Ajayi (2022) on tourists' choice of tour guides in enhancing site experience at Lekki conservation center, Lagos state, established that tourists preferred the use of tour guides in their visits as compared to touring alone the tourist sites. It was established that good communication skills played a vital role in tourist attraction since the guides could interact well and were able to answer questions asked efficiently. Communication between the tourist and the tour guide could be enhanced by the ability of the tour guide to speak in many languages.

Togoch and Koki (2018) established that tourists complained more about poor services offered by tour guides in most countries in east Africa. Specifically, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda countries were singled out as the most countries affected by tour guide service quality. This was associated with the unprofessionalism of the tour guides' service delivery, majorly contributed by factors such as poor communication skills. Nguya et al. (2021) also established that communication skills as one of the tour guide competencies significantly enhanced tourist satisfaction. Nguya, Kariuki, and Muthengi (2021) indicated that tourist satisfaction was much related to tour guide competencies in Kenya. Once the tour guide provided quality services, the international tourist expectations were likely to be enhanced, prompting them to make referrals or

revisit. In conclusion, the tour guide should be creative in the manner they communicate, and they should introduce theatrical elements in communication.

Research Hypotheses

H0₁: Tour guides communication skills have no significant influence on the satisfaction of international tourists at Nairobi tourist circuit, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

The section focuses on the theory underpinning this study, theoretical review, review of related literature, and conceptual framework.

Theoretical Review

The study was underpinned by job characteristics theory (JCT) which was advanced by Hackman and Oldham (1980) from the work of Tuner and Lawrence, Heckman, and Lawler. Tuner and Lawrence placed more emphasis on objective characteristics in work design. At the same time, Hackman and Lawler focused on the direct effect of JCT on the tasks of the employees in relation to attitude and behavior. Due to the advancement of the theory, Hackman and Oldham came up with skills, knowledge, and individual satisfaction as additional moderators.

Waaland (2020) opined that JCT argues that employees with knowledge and skills related to their tasks will be more satisfied with their output results. The employees should have an internal motivation that will foster their growth and thus lead to the delivery of quality services. This will lead to customer satisfaction. Further, the theory suggests that different skills and knowledge are vital characteristics that increase an employee's psychological state, creating personal motivation and high performance.

According to Lin, Lin, and Chen (2017), tour guides are responsible for providing good, immediate inseparable, and intangible services to tourists. They need to ascertain their crucial role in the tourism sector and apply their knowledge and skills

efficiently and effectively in order to satisfy the tourists. However, a tour guide who lacks effective job characteristics, such as effective communication skills, has a high chance of diminishing tourist satisfaction.

The strength of this theory is that it will create a stronger bond between workers (tour guides) and customers (international tourists). It also helps combine and assign tasks to specific groups and teams easily. However, the theory does not miss criticism. Some theoretical linkages contained in the model may not be fully supported. The second weakness is that job design was aligned with specific roles within an institution, unlike now, the roles are flexible and dynamic. This theory was underpinned by tour guides' communication skills on the satisfaction of international tourists.

Empirical Review

Studies related to tour guides communication skills on the satisfaction of international tourists were reviewed to determine the conceptual, contextual and methodological gap.

Tour guide communication skills and satisfaction of international tourists.

Nudin, Rashid, and Kamaruzaman (2021) examined the contributions of tour guide politeness communication on tourist interaction in Japan. A quantitative approach was adopted, where 200 respondents were selected purposively. The questionnaire was employed to collect primary data. The data obtained were analyzed by use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The results indicated that tour guide politeness had an insignificant effect on tourist satisfaction.

Abidakun and Tunde-Ajayi (2022) sought to determine the tourists' choices in selecting tour guides to foster site experience in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design where a purposive sampling technique was employed to come up with 100 respondents who were selected from Lekki Conservation Centre. A semi-structured questionnaire was employed to collect primary data, and the data was later cleaned

and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Using charts and tables presented descriptive results, and inferential statistics were presented using ANOVA, T-test, and Chi-square. The study found that excellent communication skills statistically and significantly contributed to tourists' satisfaction. The study recommended that the tourism sector enhance tour guides' communication skills, enhancing tourists' satisfaction. The study was conducted in Conservation Centre in Nigeria, while the current study was conducted in the Nairobi circuit, Kenya.

Sinare (2019) sought to analyze the tour guide's interpretation services on tourists' satisfaction with marine resources in Mafia Island- Tanzania. The study employed a cross-sectional research design. A sample comprised 30 tour guides and 20 tour operators selected purposively. On the other hand, 200 international and local tourists were selected using a simple random sampling technique. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Data were analyzed through descriptive and regression statistical analysis. The findings revealed a significant relationship between tour guide communication skills and visitors' satisfaction. The study recommended a need to equip the tour guide with interpretation skills and local knowledge to enhance tourists' satisfaction. The study employed a cross-sectional research design, while the current study adopted a descriptive research design.

International Tourist Satisfaction

Tourists can be categorized as domestic or international tourists. Tourist visits different tourist destinations for leisure. However, tourist expectations can be determined by satisfaction. The tourists' expectations and preferences differ in travel style, product loyalty, service quality, and satisfaction. Tour guide communication skills, tour guide attributes, and tour guide knowledge play a significant role in creating tourist satisfaction (Tsegaw & Teressa, 2017).

According to Jahwari, Sirakaya-Turk, and Altintas (2016), tour guides play a critical role in tourism.

They ensure tourist satisfaction by revisiting the destination. Kuo, Nien-Te, Yi-Sung Cheng, Kuo-Chien Chang, and Li-Yueh Chuang (2018) assert that tour guides must know and communicate about the tour destinations. This will help ensure that tourists receive quality services and understand their destinations. When tourists receive quality services from tour guides, they may have to revisit and make referrals.

Ahmed (2021) examined the tour guide's role in promoting tourist revisit and its effects on destination image in Egypt. The study indicated that tour guides have a direct role in creating an intention of tourist revisits. Nguya, Kariuki, and Muthengi (2021) found a high correlation between tour guides' competencies and tourist satisfaction. The study further asserted that destination competitiveness is determined by the service quality tour guides offer. To meet the expectations of the tourists, quality tour guide services ultimately contribute to tourist satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

A research design reflects the plan, strategy, and framework the researcher will use to answer the research questions (Sekaran, & Bougie, 2016). The study adopted a descriptive research design with a target population of all the international tourists visiting the Nairobi circuit between July 2022 and September 2022. The target population of 278 respondents was determined scientifically using the Cochran formula. A semi-structured questionnaire containing a five-point Likert scale was used to collect primary data. The study used descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation to give a general description of the study variables and inferential statistics such as multiple regression and correlation analysis to establish the direction and the strength of the relationship between tour guide communication skills and tourist satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the influence of tour guides' communication skills on international tourists' satisfaction at the Nairobi tourist circuit, Kenya.

Demographic Characteristics

The sample size of the study was 278 respondents. 259 questionnaires were collected out of the 278 issued questionnaires representing a 93% response rate. The study established that the majority of the respondents, 139, representing 53.7%, were male against 120 female representing 46.3%). Most of the tourists, 90 (34.7%) respondents were between 41 to 50 years, followed by 74(28.6%) respondents who were between 31 to 40 years, 60(23.2%) respondents were of age between 21 to 30 years, 25(9.7%) respondents were above 51 years old, and lastly, 10(3.9%) respondents were below 20 years. Further, it was established that 169 (65.3%) had

visited the country once, 70 (27%) had visited the country twice, 15 (5.8%) three times, and the least five respondents (1.9%) had visited the country four times.

Descriptive Statistics

The study assessed the influence of tour guides' communication skills on international tourists' satisfaction at the Nairobi tourist circuit, Kenya. A Likert scale of 5-1 was used to measure to what extent the respondents agreed on specific statements represented on the questionnaire. Where five indicated Strongly Agree, 4 Agreed, 3 Neutral, 2 Disagreed, 1 Strongly Disagreed.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation for Communication Skills

Statement on communication skills	Mean	SD
The attentiveness accorded to the tourist by the tour guide led to my visit satisfaction.	4.31	0.46
Most of the time, the tour guide's composure created a good feeling.	4.38	0.49
The tour guides systematic coordination of events and activities contributed to the high quality of service.	4.46	0.75
The tour guide has expressive skills that enhance a better understanding of activities.	4.31	0.72
The tour guide had a great sense of humor making to tour experience interesting	4.07	0.92

The findings presented in Table 1 revealed that the respondents strongly agreed that the attentiveness accorded to the tourist by the tour guide enhanced their satisfaction (M=0.4.31; SD=0.46). The respondents also agreed that the tour guide's composure often created a good feeling (M=4.38; SD=0.49). Further, the respondents also strongly agreed that the tour guides systematic coordination of events and activities contributed to the high quality of service (M=4.46; SD=0.75) and that the tour guide has expressive skills that enhance a better understanding of activities (Mean=4.31; SD=0.72).

The study also established that most respondents strongly agreed that the tour guide had a great sense of humour, making the tour experience interesting (M =4.07, SD=0.92).

These findings concur with those of Sinare (2019), which indicated that tour guides' communication skills have a positive influence on tourist satisfaction. However, on the contrary, the study by Nudin, Rashid, and Kamaruzaman (2021) indicated that tour guide politeness has an insignificant effect on customer satisfaction.

Inferential Statistics

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.784 ^a	0.615	0.610	0.26077

a. Predictors: (Constant), Tour Guide Knowledge level, Tour Guide Attribute, Tour Guide communication skills

Table 2 found an R of 0.615, indicating a positive relationship between tour guide communication skills and international tourists' satisfaction. 0.615 represents R² implying that 61% of the variation in

satisfaction of international tourists can be due to the change in one-unit increase in tour guide communication skills.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.682	3	9.227	135.697	0.000 ^b
	Residual	17.340	255	0.068		
	Total	45.022	258			

a. Dependent Variable: International Tourist Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Tour Guide Knowledge level, Tour Guide Attribute, Tour Guide communication skills

Table 3 shows that there exists a significant relationship between predictors of tour guide knowledge level, tour guide attribute, and tour guide communication skills within the satisfaction of international tourists at the Nairobi tourist circuit (F

(3,255) = 135.697, P<0.05). Thus it can be concluded that tour guides' communication skills affect the satisfaction of international tourists at the Nairobi tourist circuit, in Kenya.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	0.698	0.207		0.001
	Tour Guide communication skills	0.610	0.053	0.615	0.000

This study adopted a simple linear regression model to assess the influence of tour guide communication skills and satisfaction of international tourists.

The simple linear regression model was presented as;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where;

Y=dependent Variable (Satisfaction of international tourists)

β_0 = Constant

X_1 = Independent Variable (Tour Guide Communication Skills)

ϵ = Error Term

therefore

$$0.698Y = 0.610X_1 + \epsilon$$

Testing of Hypothesis

H_0 : Tour guides communication skills have no significant influence on the satisfaction of

international tourists at Nairobi tourist circuit, Kenya

The study rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypotheses that Tour guides communication skills have a significant influence on the satisfaction of international tourists at Nairobi tourist circuit, Kenya.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study adopted a regression model to test the effect of tour guide communication skills on international tourist satisfaction in the Nairobi tourist circuit. The findings indicated that the prediction of the effect of tour guide communication skills on international tourist satisfaction in the Nairobi tourist circuit had strongly positive and statistical significance. The results indicate that tour guide communication skills are the highest factor influencing international tourist satisfaction.

However, despite the fact that the tour guide had effective communication skills that enhanced tourist satisfaction, the tour firm must continue enhancing

the communication skills of their tour guide through training and seminars to improve their communication skills further. The study also recommended that tour guides need to be fluent in

communicating in many languages, and this would help serve different tourists effectively; thus, the tourists would be satisfied with the service delivery.

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